

# Search Strategy

## TOPIC WORKSHEET

Jot down a topic you would like to explore on the Web: \_\_\_\_\_

## BEGIN THE PRE-SEARCHING ANALYSIS

1. What unique words, distinctive names, abbreviations, or acronyms are associated with your topic?
2. What societies, organizations, or groups might have information on your subject?
3. What other words are likely to be in any Web documents on your topic?  
You may want to use AND or precede each by + [no space]
4. Do any of the words in #1 or #3 above belong in phrases or strings?  
Search these as a "phrase in quotes" (for example, "affirmative action" or "communicable diseases").
5. For any of the terms in #4 above, can you think of synonyms, variant spellings, or equivalent terms you would also accept in relevant documents?  
You may want to use OR.
6. What extraneous or irrelevant documents might these words pick up?
7. What broader terms could your topic be covered by?  
When browsing subject categories or searching sites of Webliographies or databases on your topic, try broader categories.

# **Web Searching Strategies**

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To locate sites on the Web that contain the information you require, you must use some basic searching strategies. These strategies include, for example, Boolean operators, truncation, phrase searching, field searching, and proximity searching.

## *Boolean Operators:*

- **AND:** This narrows a search. Terms linked with AND must be present in a retrieved record.
  - Example: gangs AND violence
  - The information retrieved for this search query must include both the words gangs and violence.
- **OR:** OR expands a search. This is where you can enter synonyms for a term.
  - Example: aged OR elderly
  - Information on either/or both terms is retrieved.
- **NOT:** NOT narrows a search. It excludes information from the records retrieved.
  - Example: bandage NOT adhesive
  - You want information about bandaged but not the adhesive type.

## *Truncation:*

- The use of a symbol to obtain various endings to the stem or root of a word is called truncation. Often the truncation symbol is an asterisk (\*) but the symbol may vary from database to database.
  - Example: educat\* retrieves education, educate, educator, educated, and so forth

## *Phrase Searching:*

- This searching strategy allows you to search words as phrases. On the Web, the use of quotation marks (" ") is sometimes used to indicate a phrase.
  - Examples: "civil rights," "colon cancer," and so forth
  - The use of searching phrases often leads to the retrieval of more pertinent information than searching with single words linked with the Boolean operator AND.

## *Field Searching:*

- On the Web, various search engines have the ability to search specific fields of Web pages or records. Some of the more common fields that can be searched include the URL, title, summary, images, links, and text. Different coding is used by different search engines. Searching in a specific field of a record can be a very useful feature.
  - Examples: title: slavery; title: African-American slaves